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Gas, power outages affect Wibaux area

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By Elaine Forman

A nursing home in Wibaux was evacuated Tuesday afternoon after a natural gas outage and spotty power outages in the midst of an extreme cold snap.

Electricity has since been restored in Wibaux, but the natural gas was not expected to be back on until Wednesday night, said Wibaux County Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinator Frank Datta.

Datta said the Wibaux County Nursing Home has 27 residents, and ambulances, school buses and vans were to be used to move the residents to medical facilities in Glendive and Baker.

The predicted high for Wibaux Tuesday is 2 degrees above zero. Wind chill was 21 degrees below zero at noon.

Datta said most of Wibaux and the North Dakota towns of Golva, Sentinel Butte and Beach were affected by electrical and gas outages.

According to the Montana-Dakota Utilities Web site, the pipeline company that provides natural gas to MDU had a valve freeze up early Tuesday morning, causing a disruption in service.

A few hours after the natural gas pipes froze, Wibaux lost electricity in some areas due to an overload of use.

Emergency locations have been set up in each town so people without natural gas can go to stay warm.

Datta said the Wibaux County Fairgrounds is the Red Cross shelter, which can take 200-300 people, but Tuesday morning no one had shown up.

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He said there are 600 people in Wibaux, and most were affected by the outage.

He said most of the people were going to friends and relatives who have heat.

In the North Dakota towns, the emergency location is at the local fire hall meeting rooms.

The MDU site said crews will need to shut off the meter to each customer, and once the issue has been resolved, they will go door to door to restore service.

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